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COMFORTED.



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BY THE AUTHOR OF

"TALKS WITH A CHILD ON THE BEATITUDES" AND "TALKS WITH  
A PHILOSOPHER ON THE WAYS OF GOD TO MAN."



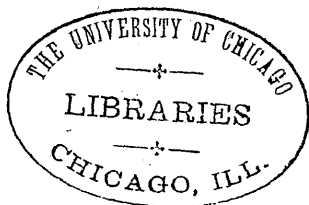
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## CHAPTER I.

**I**T was done in love," said I, in a voice crowded with all the sympathy and tenderness I could express.

She made me no reply—did not change her stony attitude, did not respond by look or word.

"In love, full of the divinest pity," I added. But it was as if I had spoken to a statue.

I sat by my afflicted friend in silence for over a minute, and then made another effort at consolation :

"God loved that baby with a love deeper, tenderer, purer and wiser than yours."

A quick, sharp quiver ran through her frame; a ripple of indignant feeling passed over her face; a flash of anger shot from her sorrowful eyes.

"Spare me, Agnes," she made answer. "I have heard this pious cant over and over again. It is an offence to me."

"If you knew," I said, "that your baby was now in the arms of a loving angel, and that it was for ever beyond all suffering and sin, that it would be cared for with the tenderest solicitude, guided by angelic wisdom, would not your heart take comfort?"

"No," she returned, bitterly. "I want my baby. I want him in my arms—I want to feel his sweet mouth again at my longing breasts—I want to look upon him and cover him with kisses."

And a low cry, so full of anguish that it made my heart shiver, broke from her lips.

What could I say? How was I to reach her with consolation? I knew that she was in the loving Father's hands, and that he

never sends suffering but as the minister of joy. But how was I to get this revelation into her heart?

"Pure love is unselfish," I ventured to say.

She did not seem to notice my remark.

"It seeks the highest good for the object of its love."

I spoke to deaf ears. I was baffled in my effort.

"Would you have that baby back again in this world?" I asked, blindly groping in the dark.

"Yes, yes! A thousand times, yes!" she answered, eagerly. "What a question to ask! Out of the grave into my arms! Oh, Agnes! you do not know a mother's heart."

"He is not in the grave," I said.

A dreary look settled in her eyes. "Where is he, then?" she asked.

"In heaven."

"Where is heaven? Do you know?"

"It is where God and the angels are."

"Yes; I have heard that ever since I was

a child. It is the talk of pious people. But who knows anything about it? I know that my baby lies in the ground, and our Church teaches that it must lie there ages upon ages, until the resurrection day. Is there no choice between a living baby in my arms and a dead baby in the ground?"

She shivered as she said this.

"A dark superstition," I replied. "Death is only another word for resurrection. It is simply going to sleep in this world and waking up in the next. That is all. I do not believe in any other resurrection.

'I do not believe the sad story  
Of ages of sleep in the tomb;  
I shall pass far away to the glory  
And grandeur of "Kingdom Come."  
The paleness of death and its chillness  
May rest on my brow for a while,  
And my spirit may lose in its stillness  
The splendor of Hope's happy smile.  
But the gloom of the grave will be transient,  
And light as the slumbers of worth,  
And then I shall meet with the ancient  
And beautiful ones of the earth.'"

She listened, bending her head, as though new thoughts were coming into her mind. The true poet, rising out of the material and sensual into the region of ideas, comes into the perception of higher truths than are ordinarily evolved by human reason, and we take them as revelations. Our hymns are often nearer the truth than our creeds and theologies.

“How beautiful!” she said, after a pause.

“And the more beautiful because true,” I made answer.

‘The gloom of the grave is but transient.’

Only a brief unconciousness — a dreamless slumber of the soul—and then the morning of eternal life. This is all the grave in which our souls are laid. Their cast-off earthly investments, shorn of their living beauty, and no longer of any use, are buried in the earth—ashes to ashes and dust to dust. But the soul cannot die—cannot lie in the grave; cannot cease to live and love. It rises, free, im-

mortal, human. So the poet understood death when he sang :

‘I am leaving only shadows,  
For the true and fair and good ;  
I must, I cannot linger—  
I would not if I could.

‘This is not death’s dark portal,  
’Tis life’s golden gate to me ;  
Link after link is broken,  
And I at last am free.

‘I am going to the angels,  
I am going to my God ;  
I know the hand that beckons,  
I see the holy road.’ ”

I could see that a calmer and tenderer state was coming to the mourner—that light, even though feeble, was dawning on the darkness of her soul. She did not reply. I now ventured to repeat a verse or two from Longfellow’s “ Resignation : ”

“ ‘ There is no death ! What seems so is transition :  
This life of mortal breath  
Is but a suburb of the life elysian  
Whose portal we call Death.

“‘She is not dead, the child of our affection,  
But gone unto that school  
Where she no longer needs our poor protection,  
And Christ himself doth rule.’”

My friend had closed her eyes, and was leaning back in her chair. I watched her face, and saw it change slowly, the hard expression of pain gradually dying out.

“Safe from temptation, safe from sin’s pollution,  
She lives whom we call dead.”

I said this quietly, yet with all the assurance of an undoubting faith that I could throw into my voice.

She did not move nor respond.

In the pause I lifted a book lying on the table near me, and as I opened it, Mrs. Lowell’s “Alpine Sheep,” which has brought comfort to thousands of bereaved hearts, was on the page. I read:

“After our child’s untroubled breath  
Up to the Father took its way,  
And on our home the shade of death  
Like a long twilight haunting lay,

“ And friends came round, with us to weep

Her little spirit's swift remove,

This story of the Alpine sheep

Was told to us by one we love.

“ They, in the valley's sheltering care,

Soon crop the meadow's tender prime,

And when the sod grows brown and bare,

The shepherd strives to make them climb

“ To airy shelves of pastures green

That hang along the mountain's side,

Where grass and flowers together lean,

And down through mists the sunbeams slide.

“ But naught can tempt the timid things

The steep and rugged path to try,

Though sweet the shepherd calls and sings,

And seared below the pastures lie,

“ Till in his arms their lambs he takes,

Along the dizzy verge to go;

Then, heedless of the rifts and breaks,

They follow on, o'er rock and snow.

“ And in those pastures, lifted fair,

More dewy soft than lowland mead,

The shepherd drops his tender care,

And sheep and lambs together feed.



“ This parable, by nature breathed,  
Blew on me as the south wind free  
O'er frozen brooks that flow unsheathed  
From icy thralldom to the sea.

“ A blissful vision through the night  
Would all my happy senses sway,  
Of the good Shepherd on the height,  
Or climbing up the starry way,

“ Holding *our* little lamb asleep,  
While, like the murmur of the sea,  
Sounded that voice along the deep,  
Saying, ‘ Arise and follow me.’ ”

I raised my eyes from the book to the face of my friend, anxious for the effect of this sweet parable. Her long lashes lay close upon her cheeks, but through their dark fringes tears were pressing.

“ Let us be patient,” I said, quoting again from Longfellow’s “ Resignation : ”

“ Let us be patient ! These severe afflictions  
Not from the ground arise,  
But oftentimes celestial benedictions  
Assume this dark disguise.

“‘We see but dimly through the mists and vapors  
Amid these earthly damps,  
What seem to us but sad funereal tapers  
May be heaven’s distant lamps.’”

The tears which had been gathering in her eyes and pressing through the shut lids now fell in large drops over her cheeks. She wept very quietly. I waited in silence for the space of over a minute, then said in a low yet firm voice, “God is love. Think of that. Love! Infinite love! And we are his children. And so, being his children, we are loved with a divinely perfect love. Could he have shown any higher love for your darling babe—his as well as yours—than he has shown in taking it from earth to heaven, from a world of sin and suffering to a world of unimagined blessedness?”

I feared to press my friend too closely, and so, after a brief pause, in which she made no response, I arose, and kissing her, said, “I will come again soon.”

She caught my arm and held it very tightly.

"Don't go," she answered, with a sob in her voice.

I laid my hand on her head and drew it toward me, as I stood by her chair. She leaned heavily against me.

"If I could say or do anything to comfort you, dear friend."

She looked up at me so wistfully—so eagerly—that I sat down again, feeling that there might be more help and comfort in me than I had imagined.

There was silence again. I broke it at last, saying what I had said in the beginning: "It was done in love—a love full of the divinest pity."

A deep inspiration, followed by a long, quiet sigh, and a heavier pressure of her head against me, as if she were finding some rest for her heart, weary with pain. She made no other response.

After another silence, unbroken for minutes, I said, "He is trying to lead you up into sweeter and more abundant pastures. Your

lamb lies sleeping on his bosom, and he looks down upon you with an infinite pity, and his voice comes sounding from its celestial height, saying, 'Arise and follow me!'"

How closely she pressed against me! How still she lay! I knew, by a subtle intuition, that she was being comforted. In what degree I could not tell, but I knew that comfort in any degree was great gain, for it was the beginning of a new and higher state up into which our Father in heaven was seeking to lift her.

"I must go now, dear friend," I said, at last, kissing her pale forehead. "But I will see you again very soon—that is," I added, "if you wish to see me."

She threw her arms about my neck in a sudden passionate burst of feeling, and wept for a long time.

"See you again, Agnes?" she sobbed, at last, almost reproachfully, "when you have brought me the only ray of light, the only touch of comfort, I have seen or felt these

many days! Oh yes! come again! Come to me very often!"

Slowly and lingeringly her arms fell away from my neck, and her pale face was lifted from my bosom. She sat up and looked at me sadly, but I perceived a new expression in her eyes—a meaning not seen before.

"It may be all right, dear friend," she said, with trembling lips, "but I cannot see it."

"If God is love, it must be right," I answered.

"God pity and comfort me!" she cried out, as if from sudden pain, clasping her hands, and looking up with a wild, appealing face. I shall never forget its expression.

"He has comforted you already," I said, softly.

"I do not know. I cannot tell," she answered, a shade of the old dreariness coming back into her face.

"I do know," was my emphatic response. "He has opened already a little window and let in some rays of comfort upon your soul."

Look to him. Pray to him. Trust in him, and he will make the darkness light about you, and turn your sorrow into tenderest gratitude and loving submission."

And so I left her, promising to come again very soon. I felt that my visit had done her good.





## CHAPTER II.

**M**Y friend, Mrs. Mary Langdon, had lost her first-born baby when it was only six months old. I was with her when it died. Such grief and despair I had not seen before. Loving with the intensity of a deeply passionate nature, the pain of her bereavement was as unfathomable as her love.

All consolation had been rejected. There was a bitter, accusing spirit in her sorrow. She even called God cruel. "Were there not enough babies in heaven that he must take mine? My only one!" she answered me, when I tried to speak of his goodness. "Was he jealous of my happiness?" she said, at another time, with a quiver of anger in her voice.

Once, on visiting her, I found her in a more

disturbed state than usual. An excellent, well-meaning lady had called to talk with and console her, but the kind of consolation she had to offer irritated instead of soothing, and turned her away from the divine Source of comfort in which alone peace and rest are to be found.

"You were making an idol of this child," said the lady, with more of rebuke than tender pity in her tone, "and so God took him. He must be loved supremely. Nothing must come between the soul and God. He will suffer no idol to stand."

"He is selfish and cruel," was the startling answer, made with flashing eyes. At this the lady grew angry, as one will sometimes when an absent friend is assailed, and so lost all power as a consoler. What more she said I will not record. It was not just to our loving Father in heaven, though she assumed to be his defender, and to say from what motive he acted in his dealings with his weak, erring, suffering, finite children.



I happened to call soon after this person left, and found Mrs. Langdon greatly disturbed. After a little effort I was able to draw from her an account of the interview. I was pained and saddened by what she told me. It was all of the grave and its gloom, and of the chastenings of God, who was jealous of his glory, and would suffer no idol to come between him and the human soul.

Long I tried to raise her mind into a truer sense of God's love and care, to help her to see that nothing of punishment was involved in the painful ordeal through which he was leading her, but only the wisest and tenderest regard for the welfare of both herself and babe. But I failed to dispel the shadows in which she was sitting.

My next interview is recorded in the preceding chapter. I had no power in my plain and homely way of presenting the truth to lift her into a region where sight was clearer, but in the calm, assuring tenderness of the poet her heart found rest, and on the wings

of his aspiring soul her soul was elevated to regions of spiritual light, where she had comforting glimpses of the love of God never seen before—a vision never to be wholly forgotten, though it might be dimmed at times by the mists of a natural sorrow.

I carried her in my heart for many days before it was possible to visit her again, but carried her more hopefully. I felt that a window had been opened in her soul, and that light from heaven was passing through.

Sad, very sad, I found her when I came again, and oh, with such dreary eyes! I smiled as I kissed her, saying: "The peace of God, that passeth all understanding, bless you, my friend!"

I saw a quick change in her face; a softening of its painfully rigid lines; a warming of its cold marble-like hue—not very marked, but to my sight clearly visible.

She laid her head silently down upon my bosom as we stood together, and was very

still. In a few moments I felt her tears dropping on my hand. Then I said, softly,

“He sees thee weep, yet does not blame  
The weakness of the flesh and heart;  
Thy human nature is the same  
As that in which he took a part.  
\* \* \* \* \*

“Turn thee to him, to him alone;  
For all that my poor lips can say  
To soothe thee, broken-hearted one,  
Would fail to comfort thee to-day.”

Her tears fell faster for a little while. In the calmness that followed, and while her face was still hidden on my breast, she said, “I have been trying to pray for help, but God seems so far off, so cold, so encompassed with grandeur and glory. I cannot feel that he hears or cares for me.”

I drew her to a seat, and we sat down together, my arm clasped tightly around her.

“‘Come unto *me*, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and *I* will give you rest.’”

I paused a few moments after repeating this comforting invitation of our Lord and Saviour.

Then, to lead her thought to him as the infinite divine Friend and "lover of her soul," I added :

" ' This, this is the God we adore,  
Our faithful unchangeable Friend,  
Whose love is as great as his power,  
And neither knows measure nor end.' "

" Not afar off," I continued, " but very, very near. Two thousand years ago this ' faithful, unchangeable Friend ' bowed the heavens and came down—down to the very lowliest. He took upon him our nature, with all its weakness and suffering and all its evil inclinations, and in himself made it pure and divine. So he became God with us—with us in this divine human nature, which, as a spiritual presence and power, is so intimately near that it is, as it were, God standing close by our side to help, strengthen and comfort us in every trial, conflict and sorrow. He is no God afar off, encompassed with grandeur and glory, as you said just now, but a loving Lord and Saviour, saying to our inner ears as he said in the

outward hearing of his disciples, 'Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' Pray to him, dear friend—to him as a divine Being, full of the tenderest pity and love; a personal God into whose ever-attentive ears you can pour your grief, knowing that he will hear and help."

My friend had turned toward me while I was speaking, and I saw in her face an expression of interest almost verging on surprise.

"He who took little children in his arms and blessed them—who, during the years of his wonderful incarnation and visible presence among men, healed the sick, opened blind eyes, cleansed lepers and went about in Judea and Galilee doing good—he, the Lord Jesus Christ, is your divine, omnipotent friend,

'Whose love is as great as his power,  
And neither knows measure nor end.'

"Look to him, dear friend. Confide in him. Go to him as to a loving father, and tell him

of your sorrow, and ask of him such help and comfort in your affliction as he knows how to give. Don't feel afraid because of his majesty and greatness. Don't even think of these, but only of his love, and pity, and readiness to pour into your bleeding heart the oil and wine of consolation."

She did not answer, but took a long, deep inspiration, and then breathed out slowly with a faint sighing sound in which was more of relief than pain. Down upon my breast she laid her head again, and was still for a long time, praying, I thought.

I had come with a purpose, yet in doubt whether Mrs. Langdon's state of mind would admit of its being made known. My doubt was beginning to fade.

"Have you heard from Mrs. Royer within a day or two?" I asked.

She merely shook her head.

"She is going to die," I said.

Mrs. Langdon raised herself quickly:

"Oh no! That can't be, surely!"

"I believe the people about her have given up all hope."

"Oh, Agnes, that is dreadful! And her baby isn't a month old!"

"Scarcely."

This Mrs. Royer was a poor young widow who had lost her husband only three months before. The shock of a sudden bereavement had been so great as to break down her whole nervous system, and since the birth of her baby, which took place two months after her husband's death, life had been steadily waning, and now, like a burnt-out candle, was flickering in the socket. A little while and her feeble pulses would be still.

The purpose for which I had come this morning was to awaken in the heart of my friend an interest in the soon-to-be motherless baby, if that were possible. I understood enough of human nature and its necessities to know that, without an interest in something out of herself, there was no comfort for my friend, that thinking and praying would be

of no avail without doing. A new love must be born in her heart, or the old love would be a tireless burden, an unassuaged pain.

"What is to become of that dear baby when its mother dies I do not know," said I, after waiting a few moments to give Mrs. Langdon time for some further remark.

"Has she no relatives?"

"None, I believe," was my answer.

My friend sighed heavily, but made no further response. I saw a troubled look coming into her face. Speaking in a low, quiet voice, I said:

"Swedenborg tells us that when infants are taken to heaven, they are given into the care of angels of the female sex who, when they lived in the world, most tenderly loved children, and that these angels find their highest joy in ministering to infants new-born into the spiritual world, and that each has as many given to her as in the richness of her love she desires."

"Say that again," my friend answered, lean-



ing toward me with a new expression of interest on her countenance.

I repeated the sentence.

“Do you believe it?” she asked.

“I have not been there to see for myself, but I find nothing in the statement that is against reason, Scripture or the loving instincts of the heart. But this I know: if I had a babe in heaven, I would be the gladdest of sorrowing mothers if I could believe that it were so. Let us think about it for a moment. An infant that dies is as infantile in soul as in body. It goes to heaven as an infant, and is just as helpless there as it was here. Now, will not the good Lord who when on the earth took little children in his arms and blessed them provide for the infants taken to heaven with the tenderest solicitude? Will he not surround them with all things needed for their good? Is there any other way for him to care for them so well as to give them angel-mothers? Think about it. Can you imagine any other relation into which a tender,

helpless baby, removed from this world to heaven, could be brought that would so well secure its happiness?"

"What more does Swedenborg say about infants who go from this world to heaven?" Mrs. Langdon asked.

"Much that at first seems new and strange, but nothing in conflict with the teaching of our dear Lord and Saviour. All that he does say is very comforting to those who have lost children, it gives to the world into which they have been transplanted such a real existence, and leads them to think of their absent ones as living, and learning, and growing up into the stature of angels."

"Growing up!" Mrs. Langdon uttered the words with a thrill of surprise in her voice, and with an expression of pain on her face. "Growing up! Not to find my baby again, even in heaven? Oh no! I can't believe that! I will not believe it!" She spoke almost passionately.

I waited for some time before speaking

again, then said, "Love in its essence is unselfish. It desires for its object the highest possible good."

She did not respond in any way. I continued: "There is no human love so pure and self-devoted as the love of a mother. She will give if need be her life for the life of her babe. She seeks to compass it about with everything from which it can derive happiness. She watches its opening mind, and rejoices in every new evidence of dawning intelligence. Its growth and development are her daily delight. As it emerges from helplessness into self-trust, from mere sensation into consciousness, how proudly she hails each sign of progress! Ask her if she would have it always remain a babe, and she will answer, 'No.'"

"I would answer, Yes!" spoke out my friend, warmly. "I would have kept my baby a babe always and for ever, if I had possessed the power."

"Do you think it would have been best for him to remain for ever undeveloped, a mere

germ of manhood, with all the wonderful powers of his soul cramped and lost?"

I saw a little shiver go through her frame.

"Oh no!" I went on; "your love for him looks higher than that. It desires for him the richest and noblest perfections of manhood and angelhood, for in any degree that he falls below the highest of these he falls below the perfection of his nature, and below the degree of happiness for which he was born."

Mrs. Langdon's head bent slowly. A shade of more serious thought dropped over her face. Her eyes rested on the floor for a long time.

"How could my baby grow in heaven?" she asked, at last, looking at me as one who propounds a difficult problem.

"Babies grow in two ways here," I answered.

"How?" she queried.

"They grow mentally as well as physically."

"Oh yes; I know that."

"Physically through the use of natural food, mentally by using food for the mind. Know-

ledge is mental food. As fast as the mind learns it grows. It is not by eating and drinking that the soul of a child develops, but by learning to think about what it sees and hears, smells and touches. Now, the removal of a babe into heaven cannot stop its mental growth. It is a baby still, even more beautiful as a form of innocence than it was here—a baby with a perfect organism, made of spiritual substance and lovely in the eyes of angels, who can take it in their arms, bear it tenderly on their bosoms and teach it heavenly things. As it learns about these heavenly things it will grow in stature as fast as it grows in knowledge, until at length it attains the full stature of a wise and loving angel."

"You surprise me with new thoughts," Mrs. Langdon said. "I never heard anything like it before."

"The poet saw all this on his mount of vision when he wrote :

‘Not as a child shall we again behold her,  
For when, with rapture wild,

In our embrace we again enfold her  
She will not be a child,

‘ But a fair maiden in her Father’s mansion,  
Clothed with celestial grace,  
And beautiful with all the soul’s expansion,  
Shall we behold her face ! ’ ”

A deeper shadow fell over her again.

“ So hard, so hard to bear ! ” she sobbed.  
“ Oh, I cannot find comfort here ! Never to  
see my baby again ! To lose it for ever ! To  
know that another has my joy. ”

“ And to know, ” I said, “ that your sweet  
baby is not a cold, dead form in the ground,  
but a living and beautiful cherub in heaven,  
loved and cared for with angelic tenderness.  
Is there nothing here for your poor sick heart ?  
Oh, there is much, my friend. ”

“ It does not make my sense of bereave-  
ment any the less, ” she answered. “ My arms  
are weary with emptiness, my breasts ache  
with fullness and long for my baby’s mouth !  
It may be well with him, but as for me, I am  
heart-broken and comfortless. ”

"God will fill your arms and ease your aching breast. Only go to him, and ask him to take away all that is selfish in your love. Ask him to give you a measure of that higher and purer love that fills the hearts of angels."

"What then?" she asked. I saw that she was beginning to comprehend my meaning, but feared, if I made it too plain, that she would reject the cup brimming with sweet wine that I was trying to raise to her lips.

"What then?" She repeated the same question.

As I was trying to frame a fitting reply the door of the room in which we sat was opened and a visitor announced.

A look of annoyance and disappointment came into the face of Mrs. Langdon.

"I will excuse myself," she said.

"No," I replied, "I have already overstayed my time, and must go, but I will come again soon."

"How soon?" she asked, holding my hands tightly and looking wistfully into my face.

“Very soon.”

“To-morrow?”

“Yes, if you would like to have me.”

“I shall look for you; and you will be sure to come?”

“Unless something of which I am not now aware prevents, I will see you to-morrow.”

And I kissed her and went away.







### CHAPTER III.

**N**OT far from the residence of Mrs. Langdon stood a small dwelling a little back from the street. The yard in front was crowded with flowers and shrubbery; vines and roses climbed up and over the white porch, filling the soft summer air with odors.

As I paused in front of this house, with my hand on the gate that opened into the yard, it was hard to realize the fact that just beyond the little patch of bloom and sweetness on which my eyes rested, just over the threshold of that pleasant home, a scene awaited me from which human "hearts" alike shrink with feelings of awe not unmingled with fear. What we call death is only the body's last sleep and the soul's resurrection into a higher

and purer life. It is an orderly change, coming after we have filled up the measure of natural life. And yet when we stand in its presence a sense of awe steals upon us. We are oppressed by its mystery.

As I passed in through the door I felt as if a weight had been laid on my bosom. The stillness was very deep. A servant met me in the rooms below.

"How is Mrs. Royer?" I asked, in a whisper.

"No better," she answered, in a repressed voice.

"Shall I go up?"

"If you please."

I ascended the stairs, treading softly, and pushed open the door of the chamber in which the dying woman lay.

I found her propped up with pillows, holding her baby, and looking down upon it with an expression of the deepest love. She was white and wasted. Her large brown eyes shone with a lustre that almost startled me.

It was evident, at a glance, that she had come very near the hour of her departure—consciously near; and I saw, after a few moments, that everything earthly had faded from her thoughts except the baby resting in her arms—that this was the link that held her back.

What was to become of her baby, the tender, helpless thing that lay against her heart? Who would give it a mother's love—such love as swelled in her bosom?

I read it all in her great brown eyes as she looked up into my face, oh, so wistfully!

"Give him to me," I said with tearful eyes and trembling voice as I reached out my hands, acting and speaking from an impulse that I could not restrain. "Give him to me."

"To keep? Oh, do you mean that?"

A flash of joy swept over her countenance, fading instantly. Hope and fear looked at me out of her eyes.

"Give him to me, and I will lay him on a breast as loving as your own, or keep him and

care for him as tenderly as if he were of my own body."

One grateful look, that is now and ever will be a picture in my soul sweet to gaze upon, one long embrace with lips pressed to baby lips—a motion for me to take the child; and then, as I lifted it gently away from her, a quiet, restful closing of her eyelids, and the gathering of a smile about her mouth. I stood above her for many minutes, with her baby in my arms, almost spell-bound. She was passing away very peacefully.

And so the angels of the resurrection found her!

There was none that cared to say "Nay" to my request to take the child. When Mrs. Royer's husband died he left her all alone in the world.

"On the earth, as in heaven, are they who tenderly love children," I said as I held the baby to my bosom, feeling as I did so a delight so pure and deep that I seemed as it were lifted into a new sphere of existence,

“and for this motherless child I must find one of these.”

I tried to think hurriedly. But thought was too slow. I could not, weighing the case as it stood, decide how best to move in the work I had in hand—the work of bringing the childless and the motherless together.

The more I thought the more confused my perceptions became. I stopped thinking, and in my bewilderment looked up and cried, “O Lord! show me what to do?”

In a little while a sense of peace and trust came into my soul. I felt rather than saw what I should do.

“I will take him away now,” I said as I wrapped the baby up closely.

No one said a hindering word. A little while afterward I entered the still chamber where my sad friend sat comfortless and alone.

“Oh, Agnes!” she exclaimed, with a look of surprise, “I did not hope to see you so soon again.”

I made no answer, but slowly unwound the

soft white wrappings with which I had covered the baby, and showed her its sleeping face. She stood motionless, gazing down upon it.

“Motherless!” I said, in a low, pitiful voice.

I saw a slight start, and then a quiver in her frame. It were best, I felt, to be silent beyond this for a little space, and let the argument of motherless babyhood have its full force.

“Motherless!” She echoed the word almost in a whisper. Then reached out her arms in a half-repressed, half-eager kind of way, as if under the influence of contending emotions. I did not put the baby in her arms, but let her lift it out of mine, so that whatever she did might be all her own.

Her eyes, as they rested on the baby’s face, had the look of one who was acting under the influence of a spell rather than from volition. She sat down in a quiet way, still repressed in all her movements.

“Motherless!” The word broke suddenly from her lips, uttered this time with a pathos that thrilled me. “Poor, poor baby!” she

added, speaking very tenderly and pitifully, drawing at the same time the precious thing in her arms tightly against her bosom. And there she held it, until the angels who were present bound it to her heart with cords of love that could not be broken.

Slowly, almost mechanically, she then removed its outer wrappings, doing so with a gentleness of movement that seemed as a guard to some strong impulse against which she was struggling. The sweet sleeping face, the tiny hands and pink feet, were all bare in a few moments. A lovelier baby, it seemed to me, no mother had ever beheld.

As it lay thus, she looking down upon and I bending over it, a pair of soft blue eyes were unveiled, and my friend, gazing into them, saw her own face there.

"His ways are not as our ways," I said. "Our ways lie through deserts or wind among rough and thorny places. They are dark and dreary. But his ways are ways of pleasantness and his paths are peace. His love goes

down to the helpless and forsaken. He is the husband of the widow and the father of the fatherless. This is his baby, and he is now saying to you, 'Take my helpless little one. I have given to the baby you so loved an angel-mother in heaven, and surrounded it with beauty and blessing far beyond anything you could have bestowed; give to this babe in return the love and care it so much needs. Be its angel-mother on earth, and your reward shall be great.'

"Oh, my friend!" I added, speaking in the fullness of my heart, "do not turn away from this divine solicitation. Out of the grave of every natural love there rises a pure and spiritual love that gives the soul new capacities for enjoyments. In your love for the baby you have lost there was an element of selfishness. You sorrow now more for yourself than for him. He is better off—is safe in heaven. If you take this poor baby, burying in the act all natural desire for ease and the vain luxuries of a fruitless sorrow, a purer



love will be born in your heart—purer because more unselfish—and so your new joys of motherhood will be greater than the old.”

She did not answer me, but sat with her eyes on the baby's face.

“Shall I take him away?” I asked after a long space of absorbed silence, during which no change of expression passed over her countenance.

Without answering she slowly raised the baby to her bosom, held it there with a tender, loving pressure for almost a minute; then made a motion as if she were going to pass him into my arms. But something stayed her hands.

“Give to the Lord as he has given to you,” said I, softly. “He has given to your baby a heavenly mother, and he now asks you to be the earthly mother of this helpless little one. He promises to bless you exceedingly in return—to comfort your heart, and to turn its sorrow into joy.”

The great travail of soul into which my act

had brought her ended in a passionate burst of weeping, and a wild clasping of the child to her breast. She kissed it over and over again, sobbing, "Oh, baby! baby! baby!" all the while rocking it in her arms. Yet across her agitated face gleams of joy swept and mingled with the shadows of her grief.

Amid all this strife of feeling the baby was tranquil. No wave of disturbance touched the sunny atmosphere in which his spirit dwelt. As she rocked him in her arms, quickly at first, but with a gradually subsiding and gentler motion, the white lids began to droop and a low, baby sigh of rest and peace came up from his sweet mouth to the ears of Mrs. Langdon. Softly she drew him to her bosom. He was asleep. When I kissed her, and said "Good-bye," the baby was still asleep. And there was such a new and elevated expression in my friend's eyes, and all over her countenance, that I could but wonder at the change.

While he slept we had talked a little. I

did not say much, for I wanted her own heart to be her teacher. What I did venture to say was only to give direction to her thoughts, and to plant, if possible, a few seeds of higher truths than she had yet known in the good ground of her soul.

"Is there not something marvelous in this mother-love?" I asked as we sat together. "In an instant of time it comes into the heart, full of tenderness and strength and self-forgetting. The evil have it as well as the good—the beast of the forest and sheep of the fold. From whence does it come?"

"From God," I said, answering my own question. "It is his love transfused into the mother."

My friend bent a little toward me, listening, but still did not reply.

"There is in the heart of God, if I may so speak," I resumed, "an infinite and eternal desire to give life and blessedness. In all initiations of life the first motions are very feeble. We, with our dull powers, cannot see

the beginning. But he sees it, and surrounds it with protection in many wonderful ways. Even in the lower forms of life this is singularly apparent. With human beings the provision of care and protection takes on its highest type. God gives to the mother a measure of divine, self-forgetting love. He pours it into her heart on the instant a new-born baby is laid on her breast; and with it gives her a joy that is unspeakable. It does not belong to her as an attribute of the soul—she has only the capacity for receiving it—but comes in the moment God entrusts an immortal being to her care. It is his love for a human soul filling her heart and inspiring all her life. The weaker and more helpless the new-born babe, the deeper and tenderer is this love. As it grows the love changes, taking on a new character with every stage of development. It is a very different thing, as felt for the child that has completed his first year, from what it was for the baby a month old, and different toward the boy of six or ten, or the young

man of twenty. But always it is the Lord's love in her heart, seeking the good of an immortal being.

"And this love," I added, "may be given with all its intensity and all its inexpressible joys, as the great reward of her who takes a baby to her bosom, even though it be not bone of her bone and flesh of her flesh. God's love may flow into her with all its sweetness; nay, will flow in if she but open her heart."

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## CHAPTER IV.

**M**RS. LANGDON had not said that she would keep the baby. But I knew from the moment I saw in her eyes the new-born mother-love that all was right for him. When I arose to leave her he was asleep, lying upon her bed, on the snowy pillow her careful hands had arranged for him—lying on the same pillow and in the same place over which but a little while before she had bent in joy gazing at another baby, now in heaven.

There was nothing indeterminate in her manner as she saw me rise to go.

“Come in the morning, Agnes; I shall want to see you,” she said.

I could not but notice the change in her

voice as she spoke. It had lost more than half of its sadness, and had a quiet firmness of tone that came from new thoughts and purposes.

I went away deeply impressed with this added proof of the self-forgetting power of divine love when it flows into a human heart, for all love that seeks the good of another is from God, no matter what its form.

I called to see Mrs. Langdon early on the next day. She met me at the door of her chamber. As I took her hand I saw the faint impression of a smile flitting around her lips. There was a restful look in her face.

"How is baby?" I asked.

"Very well," she answered in a half whisper as she drew me into the room. He was lying asleep in a crib—her own baby's crib, which was not there on the day before. I went and stood over him, she by my side.

"As sweet a baby as my eyes ever looked upon," said I.

Mrs. Langdon did not reply, but leaned her

head on my shoulder. We stood thus without speaking for some minutes. I knew that my friend was thinking of another baby, and that her heart was going away after him with inexpressible longings. I knew also that the living, breathing baby that lay before us had crept into her heart, and that his life was flowing into her life, and would soon be so bound up with it as to give pulse for pulse.

She drew me away at last, and we sat down together.

"I am not sure, Agnes," she said, speaking seriously, "that you have dealt fairly with me in this thing. You have taken me at a disadvantage."

"How so?" I inquired.

"You knew if I saw this poor motherless babe that my heart, sick with its pent-up mother-love, would go out toward it with uncontrollable tenderness—that I could not help myself. Was it right, do you think?"

"Have I wronged you?" I simply queried.

"No, I will not say that," she answered.



"Have I wronged the baby in giving it to a love like yours?—a poor motherless baby, all adrift in an evil and selfish world?"

The serious lines in her face went off, and in their stead I saw a bloom of heavenly sweetness.

"No, I think not," she said, half to herself, yet with perceptible sadness, as if a sense of loyalty to her own baby were disturbed.

The sleeping infant moved in its crib at this moment, and gave a little cry. A flush of tender concern came into my friend's face, and she arose quickly and crossed the room to where it lay. No mother ever bent over her own baby with a more loving interest than I saw in Mrs. Langdon. She laid her hand upon it with the softest of touches and soothed it back to sleep.

"What does Mr. Langdon say?" I asked as we stood by the crib.

"Nothing."

"What does he think? Your perception has doubtless reached that."

"No."

"He will leave you free to act as you may desire?"

"Yes."

My arm was about her. We walked away, silent again for a while, and sat down together.

"God is comforting you," I said, at length.

She looked up at me with a question in her face.

"He has been very near to you in the last few hours. As your heart was moved to receive one of the little ones whose angels do always behold him, he drew nigh to your soul, and as it opened to give human love, his divine love flowed in with comfort and blessing."

"You speak very confidently," my friend answered, as one a little surprised.

"If we believe anything at all about God's love and omnipresence, can we believe less than this?"

"Omnipresence—it is such a great word, like omnipotence and almighty. It oppresses me. I feel the sense of an awful power."

I took a little while to think before answering. What she had said let me again into a perception of her idea of God as grand and great and afar off. I had tried once before to give her an impression of his personal nearness, to make her think of him as a loving but invisible friend standing at her very side ; but if the impression was felt at the time, it had faded away.

I must try again, for I knew that according to her idea of God would be the measure of comfort and peace she would get from him. If she believed him to be only a grand and august Being, coldly wise and just, and sitting enthroned in celestial glory in the very heaven of heavens, she could never get near him—never open her heart to him as to a loving and sympathizing friend, and receive from him the consolation he was seeking to give.

“There is only one God,” I said, uttering the truth that all Christians believe.

Mrs. Langdon looked at me with assent in her eyes.

“And he, out of love for his disobedient and wretched children, who had gone far away from him, and were in danger of perishing, ‘bowed the heavens’ and came down that he might save them; became visible even to their natural eyes, in the person of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who was ‘God with us,’ ‘God manifest in the flesh.’ When the Lord thus came down so near to human beings that they could see him with their natural eyes, touch him with their natural hands, and hear his voice sounding in their natural ears, he also came near to their spiritual consciousness—nearer than he had ever been before.

“After his great and wonderful work of human redemption from the power of evil, in which he was able to feel, in the humanity he assumed, all the pain and suffering and all the temptations that any soul could endure, he made that humanity divine. Though no longer visible to our natural senses in this divine humanity, he can and does come near

to our souls—a personal God, seeing us, knowing all our hearts, yearning over and pitying us with an infinite tenderness. There was not a single display of his love and compassion while he walked among men, two thousand years ago, that was not a type of the spiritual blessings he is now seeking to bestow.

“Oh no, my friend! God is not a God afar off, but near at hand. He is closer to us than a brother. It was in order to get near to us that he took upon him our nature, and felt the heart-beat of poor humanity.”

I saw a light coming into my friend's face.

“The Lord Jesus, he is God—the Alpha and the Omega; the beginning and the end; the first and the last; and without him there is no other. And it is he that says, ‘Come unto me, and I will give you rest.’ It is he that says, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life.’ No, not a God far away, shrouded from his people in essential glory, but a God near to the humblest and weakest of his creatures.”

The light in Mrs. Langdon's face grew stronger.

"Try, dear friend," I added, "to think of the Lord and Saviour as a God full of compassion and gracious. But he cannot comfort you unless you do his will, for it is in the doing that comfort comes. Just in the degree that we deny ourselves, and do the good he sets before us, will he bless us. He stands at the door of your heart and mine, knocking, and says, 'If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in and sup with him, and he shall sup with me.' How shall we open the door and let him in? By doing his will. That is, by refraining from all evil ways, and acting in our spheres of life according to the spirit of his divine precepts."

"That is," said Mrs. Langdon, with a pained, helpless kind of look, "we must become Christians, and I don't think that is possible for me. I never had a religious turn of mind."

I smiled back in her face, saying, "To be a

Christian is to follow the example of Christ. It is all very simple. Without knowing it you have already begun a Christian life, and already, through the open door of your heart, Christ has entered and said unto your troubled spirit, 'Peace, be still!'"

"Oh, Agnes! what do you mean?" she exclaimed, leaning toward me with a flash of new thoughts in her eyes.

"The Lord said to you," I answered, "in such a plain way that you could not but understand him, 'Take this helpless babe and nurture him for heaven;' and you took the babe and let him nestle in your heart. And as he entered, through the open door went in the Lord and his angels. And where they go in there is peace for the troubled and comfort for those who mourn. My friend, retain these heavenly guests! Never let them go out. Though the heaven of heavens cannot contain the Lord, he will yet abide with you if you but do his will."

"How shall I do his will? Oh, Agnes! if

I but knew how!" She spoke with great earnestness.

"You are doing it in this very thing. It is not in the forms of external worship that we must do the Lord's will, but in a daily life of usefulness to others. He may never hear our vain prayers put up for some good, selfishly desired, though we cry never so earnestly; but the smallest act of kindness to a fellow-being will bring him near to our souls, and he will bless us in the degree that we are unselfish in our good deed. If we would be Christians, that is, followers of Christ, we must walk in the way he walked while upon earth."

"Simply that?" Mrs. Langdon asked, with the tone and manner of one surprised by a new thought.

"How else are we to be Christians?" I replied. "If we do not follow in the footsteps of our Lord, we cannot be his disciples; and to follow him is to imitate his example in doing good to others. If we regard only ourselves, live only for our own ease and gratifi-



cation, refuse to help the helpless when they fall in our way, have no pity nor mercy nor love for others, we are not his disciples, no matter how piously we may live. Prayers and sacraments hurt rather than benefit those who call themselves Christians, yet refuse to do his will."

"I see," my friend answered. "Yes, it is plain that we must do the will of Christ if we would be called by his name. The question is, How are we to do his will? what is required of us?"

"To do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly before our God. This is the sum of religion," I replied.

"Ah!" she said, "if we are to be tried by that test, who shall stand?"

"Not those who wrong the neighbor, or shut out pity from their hearts, or let spiritual pride bear them loftily. But he that giveth only a cup of cold water shall have his reward. In the very least thing we do to help and bless another there is a turning of the soul to God,

a practical response to the divine call, 'Come unto me.' Alas! how many hungry and thirsty souls there are who cry daily, and in bitter anguish of spirit, for the living bread and water, and yet it is not given! Why?"

I left the question for my friend to answer. I wanted her to see the reason in her own thought and not in mine. After a prolonged silence, she said, "Because the hand is not reached out to take them. Is not that the reason?"

"Can there be any other? The Lord says to us, 'Behold I stand at the door and knock.' He does not wait for us, but in his love for our souls comes and knocks. The door is shut. He will not force it open, for that would be of no use. We must open the door to our heavenly Guest. Now, we cannot open it by thinking or willing or praying—only by doing his will. So it is with our spirits when they grow faint and sick for lack of heavenly food; we must reach out our hands, as you have just said, and take the bread of heaven and

the waters of eternal life. To reach out the hand in this sense is to do what the Lord says. Obedience is no mere ideal thing. Its beginnings are in the thoughts and purposes of the soul, but it has no true existence until it comes down into act, until the hands take hold of duty. The purpose, the thought, and the act are all necessary to make obedience real. Then, and then only, is prayer answered; then, and then only, is the door opened for the Lord to enter; then, and then only, can the soul be satisfied with living bread and water."

The baby moved in his sleep, and gave a feeble cry. Quick as thought, Mrs. Langdon was by his side, her manner expressing the most loving interest. Her soft touches did not quiet him back to slumber, and so she lifted him in her arms and brought him across the room to where we had been sitting.

He was a sweet baby. As he lay upon her lap, his tender blue eyes fixed, as by a kind of fascination, on the face that bent above him,

he seemed the loveliest thing I had ever looked upon.

"Their angels do always behold the face of my Father."

I said these wonderful words softly and reverently.

"What does that mean?" my friend asked.

"I think it means," I answered, "that the best of angels—those who are nearest to God—are present with infants, and give to those who have the care of them all the gentleness, tenderness, and loving interest in their power to bestow. If this be so, then she who takes a baby into her heart has the highest of heaven's angels as her guests."

Very, very still my friend sat, bending over the child that lay upon her lap for a long time.

"I feel very strangely," she said at last, in a subdued way.

"How strangely?" I asked.

"It seems as if a door had been opened for me into a new world of thoughts and impressions."

"I think it has," was my reply. "Oh, my dear friend!" I added, with ardor, "do not turn away from that open door, but enter in. 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.'"

"For them that *love* him. I cannot say that. I am conscious of no such feeling toward God."

"He that hath my commandments, and doeth them, he it is that loveth me."

"There is no love in mere obedience," said Mrs. Langdon.

"First obedience, and then love," I replied. "When, from a sense of duty to God and the neighbor, we compel ourselves to do what we see to be right, we open our hearts to divine influences; and then love begins to take the place of cold obedience."

"And so," she said, with light again breaking into her face, "in the keeping of his commandments love is born."

“Yes, and in no other way. Not through praying, nor by any effort of thought or will—not in pious acts, nor by means of sacraments—do we get the great blessing of God’s love in the soul; but by walking in his ways—by doing the things set down in his commandments. Then, and then only, can he give us that spirit of divine unselfishness which burns with neighborly love.”





## CHAPTER V.

**I**T was all right with the motherless baby. From one soft, warm bosom it went to another, unconscious of the change, and made for itself a home there, blessing and blest.

It was touching to see, as I saw it many times in the first few months that followed this new relation, the conflict that often came up in the heart of Mrs. Langdon between the old love and the new. The slow but steady absorption of interest in the baby that grew lovelier in her eyes every day, that claimed more and more of her care and thought, and the gradual removal, as it were, of that other baby, whose loss had almost broken her heart, to a farther and farther distance, so that the thought of it sometimes did not come to her

for hours together, was working a visible change in her life and feelings.

But there were times when memory suddenly brought the lost one so near to her, with a revival of old tenderness, that her very soul became flooded with grief—times when, turning from the present, she took herself away from all observation, and alone with God and the past wrestled over again with the sorrows that had once shaken the very foundation of her life.

But these states became of less and less frequent occurrence, and their absorption of her feelings less and less intense, until they assumed at last the form of a tender sadness, fed by sweet memories of infantile grace and loveliness, like a sweet dream crystallized.

An event that occurred about a year after she took to her heart the motherless baby completed the change that had been going on in her feelings, and grief became a passive sentiment—pure, patient and resigned.



I called one morning about this time.

"How is baby?" I asked. I had heard on the day before that he was not very well.

"Ill, I'm afraid," she answered.

The anxious fear in her eyes expressed more than her words.

"What ails him?" I inquired.

"The doctor does not say." I noted a kind of choking huskiness in her voice.

"Come up and see him," she added. I followed her to the chamber, where he was lying in his crib. As I entered I observed a faint but peculiar odor in the atmosphere of the room, and felt a shadow of vague concern pass over me. He lay in a heavy kind of sleep. His face was flushed, and as I touched it lightly with my hand, I noted the heat as unnatural. We both stood looking down upon him for a good while without speaking. The name of a dreaded disease was in my thought, and I doubted not in hers also. But neither of us gave voice to a word the sound of which is so full of alarm.

The doctor came in soon after. I watched his face as he bent over the crib. It was grave and thoughtful. He felt the baby's pulse, looked closely at his skin in a peculiar way that sent a throb of fear to my heart, and then asked a few questions.

"What ails him, doctor?" Mrs. Langdon asked, anxiously.

"Nothing very serious, I hope," the doctor replied, trying, as I saw, to speak in a half-indifferent tone.

She fixed her eyes keenly upon him, seeking to read his face.

"A little thing," he added, "will often disturb the balance of health in a child."

"But he has a great deal of fever, doctor," said Mrs. Langdon.

"Yes, some fever, but that is very common with children when anything ails them. In an hour from this time his flesh may be as soft and cool as ever."

"Isn't his skin very red, doctor?" my friend asked.

"His face is a little flushed," was answered evasively.

"Oh, doctor! I feel very anxious!" exclaimed Mrs. Langdon, her fears pressing for voice, and she wound one hand within the other in a nervous way. "If it should be—"

She held back the word, as if its very utterance would have a malign power.

The doctor was at no loss for her meaning, nor was I.

"Don't give yourself any needless anxiety," he answered in an assuring voice. "A very little thing produces fever in a child. It will all be right in a few hours."

"Is there much scarlet fever about, doctor?" she asked with a forced calmness so complete that she scarcely betrayed the fear that was making her heart sick.

"Not a great deal," the doctor replied, quietly.

Then there was silence, a very oppressive silence, for many moments. It was broken by a moan, and then a cry of suffering from the

sick child, who put his hands to his throat as if something hurt him.

"Oh, baby darling!" cried Mrs. Langdon, bending over him and lifting his head upon her arm. "Does anything hurt baby?"

I saw enough in the doctor's face to confirm all my fears. His close examination of the baby's throat did not cause his face to brighten.

"Oh, doctor!" said my friend, her face growing deadly pale, "don't deceive me! Is it scarlet fever?"

Before replying he examined the skin on various parts of the child's body; then said, "Nothing more serious than scarlet rash, I trust."

Mrs. Langdon staggered back a few paces from the crib and sat down, looking very pale and frightened. She was not deceived. She knew it was scarlet fever, and of no mild type.

In a little while she got up and stood over the crib, looking down upon the sick baby with eyes that saw but dimly through tears. The fear and agitation shown just before were

hiding themselves, and in their place signs of a loving, self-abnegating care for the sufferer were becoming visible. The frightened mother was losing herself in the tender nurse.

"Tell me just what to do, doctor," she said, with a calmness of tone and manner that took me by surprise, "for I know that the physician depends quite as much on his nurse as on his medicine."

"Yes, good nursing is worth quite as much as medicine, often more," replied the doctor. "I think in this case," he added, with an assuring manner, "that we have all the advantages on our side."

He then made a prescription, and after giving a few simple directions went away.

For many days, as the disease advanced to a crisis, it seemed to baffle all the physician's skill and the nurse's care. The type was very malignant. I was with my friend almost constantly. She allowed herself neither rest nor sleep. No hand but hers gave the medicine, and no hand but hers ministered to the rest-

less sufferer. By night and by day she hovered about him like an angel. It was all in vain that I entreated her to care a little for herself, to give me the watcher's place for an hour at a time. She could not be drawn from her post.

At last the crisis came, and life and death hung in so even a balance that a pulse-beat seemed strong enough to break the equipoise. At this point my friend was very calm. You could detect no tremor in her low voice when she spoke, no unsteadiness of hand when she lifted and turned the little sufferer or put the medicine to his lips. She moved about the chamber with a slow yet firm and decided air, like one wholly self-possessed and clear-sighted. She expressed no doubt, uttered no word of fear, but gave herself wholly to the work of saving a life that was in most imminent peril.

At eleven o'clock at night the doctor called. It was his third visit in twenty-four hours. We received him in silence. He came and

stood over the baby, looking at him steadily for some moments. Then he laid his fingers on the pulse and timed the beats by his watch.

"Have you noticed any change?" he asked.

We shook our heads.

Meanwhile the baby lay in a heavy stupor. His face and neck were red and badly swollen, his lips crusted with fever-sores, his eyes half open, but not disclosing the dark pupils. He moaned now and then feebly.

"There will be a change before to-morrow morning," the doctor said as he arose to go, "and I trust it will be for the better."

Mrs. Langdon did not stir nor lift her eyes from the baby's face. There was nothing assuring in the doctor's voice. It was plain that he feared the worst. I walked with him to the door, and we parted in silence. Coming back, I seated myself beside Mrs. Langdon, and watched with her for a long time, neither of us putting our thoughts or our fears into words. At midnight the baby was lying in a

stupor so heavy that he seemed scarcely to breathe.

Slowly the hours passed. One, two and three were rung out, and still we could note no change. Through all this long period of anxious suspense we had spoken but little to each other, and then only in voices suppressed to whispers.

It was after four o'clock. Glancing out of the window that looked eastward, I saw just along the horizon the faint liftings of day-break. The dim precursor of morning held my eyes for a few moments. I turned from it to look at the baby. How still he lay—still almost as if dead! Yet, even as I looked at his motionless form, hope took lodgment in my heart. Something about him that I could not then make tangible told me that the crisis had been safely passed. I leaned close down over him and listened to his breathing. It was soft and even, but very faint. By the dim light in the chamber I now saw that his face had lost much of its red and tumid character,



and looked pale and wasted. He did not stir nor moan, nor give any sign of suffering or unrest.

A deep, almost supernatural, hush pervaded the room. Mrs. Langdon, who for nearly an hour past had sat motionless as a statue, now bent over the child. There was the sound of a spasm in her throat as she caught her breath. I felt a shiver in her frame. She had noticed the deathlike stillness and pallor, and her first impression was that the end had come.

"The crisis is past," I said, trying to steady my voice, "and he is safe!"

She fell against me heavily, all strength going out of her. I supported her to a lounge, and laid her upon it. She remained very still, like one in a deep sleep, for several minutes. Leaving her, I went back to the crib, my heart trembling in suspense between new-born hope and the fear which had lain upon it for long hours like an oppressive nightmare.

The visible signs of a healthy change in the

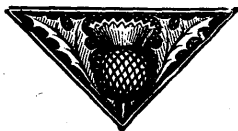
baby's condition were so few and small that in searching for them I seemed to lose them. I could not so much see as feel by a kind of inner sense that he was better. I held my very breath as I stood there, lest a sound or motion should disturb the sleeping babe and sway the trembling balance of life adversely. A faint rustle of garments came to my ears, and then I felt them touch me. Two forms again bent over the still sleeper. I turned and looked into Mrs. Langdon's face. It was white as ashes. I drew my arm about her, saying in a whisper, "It is all coming right, thank God!"

Again she caught her breath with a spasm. I felt as before the shiver in her frame. But this time it was a struggle for the repression of joy instead of despair.

When the doctor came that morning all our hopes were confirmed. He pronounced the crisis safely over.

From that time no memory of the baby in heaven had power to revive the old hungry

sorrow that had eaten into her life. Her thought of him was sacred and sanctified, and left a sweet peace and rest in her soul. It was as if his presence with her had been only in a vision, the remembrance of which haunted her like strains of sweetly solemn music.





## CHAPTER VI.

**I** NEVER could have believed it," said a lady friend. We had been speaking of Mrs. Langdon. "How it is possible for her so to forget her own baby is what I cannot understand. There is something unnatural about it."

"She has not forgotten her own baby," I replied; "that is in heaven, and far beyond the reach of any loving ministration. She cannot feed or clothe it. She cannot hush it to sleep on her bosom. She cannot lavish upon it the overflowing riches of her mother's heart. God is doing for it more and better a thousand-fold than she could do. What then? Shall she let the sweet tendernesses of motherhood be poured out like waters upon the sand? Shall no baby have blessing through her? Shall

weak hands be stretched out and a feeble voice call to her in vain? No, my friend, she has done right, and God has been good to her in return."

The lady shook her head, answering,

"I cannot see it. As for me, I could never let another woman's baby take the place of my own. The very thought fills me with pain and repulsion."

"God's love is without partiality," I said. "We are all his children."

"Oh yes, I know all that," she replied, a little impatiently, I thought.

"Which is best?" I asked—"to let love waste itself, as in the case of your friend Mrs. Mansfield, or to let it become fruitful, as in the case of Mrs. Langdon? Which is happiest? Which is doing most truly on earth the will of God as it is done in heaven?"

"I'm not good enough for all that," the lady answered, her voice changing. "I'm only human."

"You profess to be a Christian woman," I

ventured to say. "You are a church member; you read the Bible and pray, and seek to be near the Lord when the bread is broken and the wine poured at his table. You live in the hope of eternal blessedness in heaven."

"And what has all this to do with other women's babies?" she asked, again showing some impatience.

"If," I returned, "you had been in Mrs. Langdon's place, it would have had much to do with it. As a Christian woman she would have rejected Christ if she had rejected the helpless baby he sent to her."

"You speak harshly, it seems to me," the lady replied. "Is there not a savor of fanaticism, not to say presumption, in such language? To speak of one as rejecting Christ because she cannot see it to be her duty to adopt some motherless child is assuming more than the fact will justify."

"I do not mean by rejecting Christ," I returned, "what is commonly understood by this form of speech. I only mean that if Mrs.

Langdon, when that baby was brought to her in the providence of God, had refused to take it to her bosom, she would, in so doing, have shut her heart to all those sweet and comforting divine influences which the Lord was seeking to pour into her soul. Therefore, in rejecting the office to which she had been chosen, she would have so shut the door of her heart that the Saviour could not enter, and thus she would have rejected him. We are, all of us, doing something like this every day. In our selfish love of ease, in our eager pursuit of some worldly gain or pleasure, we are rejecting the Lord, and so making for ourselves unrest, dissatisfaction, and often sorrow. Every time we refuse to do his will, no matter in what degree, just in so far do we reject him. I mean this, and nothing more."

The lady seemed much disturbed. What I had been saying reached conviction, but it had a troubling and not a tranquilizing influence.

"Let us look at this matter practically, and

with living illustrations before us," said I, after we had talked a while longer. "I think no one would say that your friend Mrs. Mansfield loved her baby with a truer or deeper mother's love than was felt by Mrs. Langdon."

"No, I do not think they would," she replied.

"And yet to-day one is comforted and the other comfortless. One sits idly nursing a vain sorrow, while the other, giving herself to loving duty, is peaceful and resigned. Which is wisest? Which is happiest?"

"In that view of the case," the lady answered, "Mrs. Langdon is, of course. But it isn't every one who could have done the violence to nature she did when she consented to give the place of her own baby to that of another."

"Is she not the gainer?" I asked.

"Perhaps she is."

"There is no perhaps about it," I could not help saying with emphasis. "The gain is



beyond computation. God knocked at the door of her sorrowful heart when he brought to her a helpless infant, motherless and friendless. She opened the door when she consented to accept the trust—opened it for Him to enter who says, ‘If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in.’ It is by obedience to a clearly-seen duty that we open the door to our divine Friend. She opened the door, and the Comforter came in.”

“No doubt it is better for Mrs. Langdon that she took the baby. But I am sure that I could not have done it,” the lady answered.

“And think how much better for the baby,” I said. “Ah! is it not all wrong, is it not a strange commentary on the Christianity of to-day, that hundreds of thousands of orphaned or cast-off little ones, tender infants but a few days or weeks old, it may be, can find no hearts to love them, no soft bosoms on which to rest in peace and comfort, but must be consigned to the cold charity of an almshouse? It always makes me shiver when I

remember what I once saw in the baby's department there."

"You have thought more of this subject than some of us," the lady replied, "and maybe to higher and better purpose. No doubt it would have been a great deal wiser in my friend if she had followed the example of Mrs. Langdon. But I hardly think she could have done it."

"Why?" I asked.

"She could not have so turned from her own baby," was replied.

"It was God's love for her baby that filled the heart of Mrs. Langdon so full of an all-pervading tenderness. She did not feel it until the baby was born. Then it became, as it were, a part of her life, and love and ministration a necessity of her being. When the baby faded out of her sight, and she no longer felt it in her clasping arms, love was turned into anguish of soul. All its sweetness, all its unutterable delights, were gone. There was no hope and no help in any reaching out

after the lost one, for he had gone away never to return. The new-born mother-love, so deep, so pure, so intense, had now become a burden and a pain. God could help and comfort her only in one way. She must have something on which to lavish this mother-love, and so make it a delight. It was not a turning away from her own baby, as you have called it, but a new flowing forth of a love whose sudden obstruction had filled her with inexpressible griefs. It was letting the divine care and loving concern for human souls just born into the world flow out through her; and God never makes us the instrument of his great beneficence without at the same time putting to our lips a cup full of blessing. It will be our own fault if we do not drink of it freely."

"Ah, well!" sighed my lady friend, "no doubt all this is true; and happy are they who can accept and live by it."



## CHAPTER VII.

**T**WO years had passed. The baby, after his recovery from scarlet fever, gained his usual health, the disease having left no sad record of its existence. Daily he grew in infantile beauty, and daily twined some new tendril of his outreaching life with that of one he knew only by the sweet name of "Mother."

Two years had passed. I was spending a day with Mrs. Langdon. We were sitting in the nursery, and the baby, now a healthy, happy boy just entering his third summer, was playing about the room. We had been talking on various themes suggested by social, personal, and public matters, when in a pause of the conversation I saw an absent look come

into my friend's face. Her eyes seemed to be gazing afar off, but inwardly. She sat very still. I did not break by word or movement the revery into which she had fallen. Presently the baby came and leaned upon her, looking into her face.

"Mamma!" he said, and put up his hands to be taken.

She lifted him into her arms in a quiet, half unconscious way, and drew his head down upon her shoulder. He was tired with playing, and in a few moments went off to sleep.

"My precious child!" said Mrs. Langdon, rousing herself as soon as she became aware that he had fallen asleep. And she kissed him with a warmth of manner that showed more than usual excitement of feeling. Then laying him across her lap, she gazed upon him lovingly, yet with something in her countenance that caused me to observe her more closely. Again she bent down and held her lips long upon his forehead. I saw tears in

her eyes and a quiver of emotion in her face as she lifted herself.

"I don't know what has come over me to-day, Agnes dear," she said, only half repressing a sob that swelled in her throat. "My own baby—"

She broke down, sobbing and weeping passionately. I had never seen her so disturbed but once before.

"Is with the angels," I said, softly.

"Oh yes, dear, I know that," she answered after this unusual tide of feeling had begun to ebb, and she could speak in an even tone. "I know all that, and thank God for it! But he has seemed to be very near me all day; and I have found myself wondering so many times how he looks—if he is still a sweet little helpless baby, or a bright, loving, happy boy like this one. I remember what you said once about babies growing up in heaven, and at last coming to the full stature of angels; and something in my heart tells me that it must be so. Well, to-day—oh, so many

times!—I have had in my mind a picture of him playing about the room with Charlie, and more than once it was so real that I thought he was actually present to my natural vision.”

“God is very good,” I returned, “and ready to bless us in all possible ways, only withholding what, in our blindness or selfishness, we would use to our hurt. It is a spiritual law that thought of another in some way gives conscious nearness or presence. And so I doubt not that thinking of your baby in heaven has often brought him so near to you that if your inner eyes had been opened you would have seen him.”

“Dear baby!” she exclaimed, with trembling eagerness. “What would I not give to see him!”

“As tender and helpless as when the Lord took him?” I asked.

“Yes, as tender and helpless and sweet, so that I could have him just here!” and she drew her hands tightly over her bosom.

I said no more for a while. Out of the past

had come memories of the old states of inexpressible delight; and she longed to have them renewed. They could do her no harm now. In the living present she was doing the work set for her by the Father in heaven, and he would take care of the past, so that no memory thereof should have power to shadow her soul.

A soft light shone in the eyes of Mrs. Langdon; peace rested on her tranquil face; the old state was passing away.

"It is all right, and for the best. I would not have it changed," she said, speaking very calmly. "Dear baby in heaven! Safe from all harm, and blessed beyond anything in the power of this world to give! It was for myself that I so longed just now to have him again in my arms. But would it not be cruel in me to bring him back if I could? The love that would do this I can now see to be only a selfish love. My gain would be his loss."

"All women are not so favored," I said.



"How?" she asked.

"You have given an angel to heaven, yet have not lost the mother's reward on earth. If he were bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh, this baby on your lap could not be dearer than he is."

"No, not dearer. That were impossible!" she replied, looking down upon him with love-lighted eyes.

In the smile that rested like a faint sunbeam on her face, in the tranquil brow and lips, you read the story of inward peace. All the old yearnings for the lost one had been absorbed in her new life. Divine love had come into her heart through the door opened for human love to go out. For the weak, half-blind, imperfect human love she gave at the first in constraint of duty, God had blessed her with a love so rich that it filled her life with a sweetness and satisfaction beyond the power of words to describe.

It so happened that not long after this interview with my friend whom God had com-

forted, I had occasion to see Mrs. Mansfield, who was mentioned in the previous chapter. Her baby had now been dead for nearly two years, and in all that time she had mourned its loss with a sorrow that would not be comforted. For the first four or five months of this period she so shrouded herself in gloom that no one could come near her without being touched by a depressing influence. The very sunlight was banished from her dwelling. And it was now said of her that no one had ever seen her smile since the death of her baby.

Mr. Mansfield, once known as a cheery, sympathetic man, pleasant to meet, had become silent and moody, and it was reported that a coldness had grown up between himself and wife. The report was not, as I had reason to know, without foundation.

I found Mrs. Mansfield, on the occasion now referred to, sitting alone and reading. She laid her book aside in a slow, listless kind of way as I entered, and rising took my hand,

but without any return of the pressure I gave. She looked at me with pensive eyes and a face in which you saw little except weariness and discontent.

"How are you?" I asked.

"Oh, about as usual," she replied. "I never know what it is to feel very well."

"You stay at home too much," I said.

"Perhaps I do, but what is there to take me out? I don't go into company, and one soon drifts away from society when this is the case."

"But why not?" I asked. "Society has claims on us all."

An expression of surprise came into her face, accompanied by a slight flush, as if a ripple of anger had moved across the surface of her feelings.

"I have nothing to give society," was her strange reply.

"If that be so, your case is exceptional," I replied, smiling so as not to let the reproof in my words push her away from me.

She answered me with some disturbance of manner :

"I have lost all interest in the things that most interest the people I happen to know. I have nothing to do with fashions, and my soul turns away from all the gay frivolities of social life. I am out of place almost everywhere except at home."

"But you need not be, Mrs. Mansfield," I ventured to say.

"You do not know," she replied quickly, and, I thought, a little impatiently. "I am not what I was, and never expect to be." Her voice lowered to a sad monotone. "When the light went out of my life, it left me sitting in utter darkness—a darkness on which no sun can ever rise. When God took my baby from me he left me comfortless."

"He left you," I could not help saying, "a mother's heart full to overflowing of love."

"To stagnate," she said, bitterly.

"Not unless you willed it so."

"I had no election in the case. He took

my baby, and I had nothing to love. I was helpless and in despair."

"It was not so with Mrs. Langdon," I suggested.

I was hardly prepared for the quick change this sentence produced. A look, part scorn and part contempt, swept across her face.

"Do you think," she said, almost angrily, "that *I* could forget *my* baby?—that *I* could give *his* place to another? Oh no!"

What could I say? The mother-love with which God dowered her when he gave her an immortal soul to nurture for heaven had been shut up in her heart, where all its strong impulses, like caged birds, had ever since struggled for escape, beating and bruising her heart, until what had been given for blessing had become a curse. I felt the task of lifting her out of the darkness and misery in which she dwelt a hopeless one, so far as I was concerned—at least, hopeless then—and so did not press the subject further. Enough that I have shown the reader her state of

mind in contrast with that of Mrs. Langdon; and the reader is left to say which of the two bereaved mothers was wisest, which best served her God as a Christian woman, which was most loyal to her own baby, and which was happiest.





## CHAPTER VIII.

**Q**H, Agnes dear! I was just thinking of you," was the warm greeting I received from Mrs. Langdon. I found her busy at work on a garment for her boy, who was playing about the room. He was singing in a childish murmur to himself, and his voice made melody in her heart.

I saw through the smile on her face a shade of the old tenderness, and knew that her heart had been going out to the one in heaven.

"Thinking of me!" I replied. "That is pleasant. I like to be thought of by my friends."

"I think of you very often," she returned.

"Do you?"

"Yes, and the thought always gives me strength for duty."

I was touched, and could not keep the moisture out of my eyes.

"To-day," she went on, "something that you said a good while ago has been running in my mind. It was about the condition of infants in heaven, as related by Swedenborg."

"Oh yes, I remember. He says that when infants die, or, as he expresses it, are raised up into heaven after leaving their mortal bodies, they are given into the care of angels of the female sex, who, when they lived on the earth, most tenderly loved children."

Mrs. Langdon closed her eyes and leaned her head back upon the chair in which she was sitting. Her face had an absorbed, happy expression.

"Yes, that was it," she said, lifting her head after a few moments. "It was not long after you told me this before I began to think of my dear baby as in the arms of an angel-mother. I saw him there in waking fancies and in my dreams until it became a reality. Words cannot tell the comfort I have had



from this belief. Oh, it must be so! And now, Agnes, I want you to tell me what more he says about the little children whom God takes away from this world."

"It is all very comforting, as I said to you before," I answered. "The fondest mother could not ask for her baby anything better. Immediately on the death of a little child—or, to speak more correctly, immediately on its resurrection into the spiritual world—it is received, Swedenborg says, by angels, and taken into heaven. It knows nothing of death as we see it from this side. Death to the baby is only a pleasant sleep, and its waking peaceful and happy. When the eyes of its spirit open it sees a loving face and feels the clasp of tender arms. It knows not of the great transition through which it has passed. Life flows on as if continuously, but with a sense of enjoyment deeper and purer than before. In wise and loving ways it is provided that no perception of loss or strangeness shall be felt."

I saw tears dropping on Mrs. Langdon's folded hands.

"So it is that they are raised up," I went on. "Out of the shadows of earth they rise into the beauty and brightness of heaven. Of the dark passage, as we call it, they know nothing. It is only tranquil sleep to them. And now, that they are raised up, their life goes on. Their angel-mothers are far wiser than earthly mothers, and know a thousand times better how to nurture them and provide for their wants."

"Want in heaven?" queried my friend.

"The soul has needs," I answered. "It must be fed. The baby new born into heaven has a spiritual body, the same that gave life to its natural body here, and it cannot live and grow without spiritual food, any more than the mind or spirit while yet in a mortal body can grow without mental food. And one of the offices of an angel-mother is to see that the baby given her is provided with the food it needs."

"There is something so real about this—almost common," said Mrs. Langdon, a little soberly.

I could not help smiling.

"Life is real," I said; "and no life is more real than the life of the soul. In the other world the same law must govern that governs here, for our natural world is but the outgrowth of the spiritual world. Whatever exists here must exist there, but in a spiritual way. There is a hunger and thirst and nakedness of the soul, as well as of the body. The soul, when it leaves its natural body and life in the material world and rises into the spiritual world, must have its food and drink and clothing and habitation, and all things adapted to its spiritual senses and life-needs, or it could not be happy. Think for a moment. Can you conceive of any other mode of life than one similar to our lives in this world?"

"I have never thought of the next world in any definite way," was replied.

"But now that you have a loved one there, thought yearns for some intelligence regarding him. You want to know how it is with the departed. You are not alone in this desire. Millions of hearts are yearning to-day like yours."

"And you believe that Swedenborg has solved this great mystery?"

"I have not said so. I have only spoken of the reasonableness of what he says about those who die in infancy."

"But how did he know?" Mrs. Langdon asked.

"His own explanation is simple," I replied. "He says that every man has a spiritual body as well as a natural body, and that both are equally endowed with senses, organs and functions; that the spiritual body, or soul, is within the natural body, causing it to have life in nature; that the spiritual man is the real man that lives for ever, but that during a man's life in the world the spiritual senses remain closed, so that he does not see into the

spiritual world, and therefore knows nothing about it. If his spiritual senses were opened he could see objects in that world.

“Well, Swedenborg says that the Lord opened his spiritual senses, so that he could see and hear and be consciously present in the spiritual as well as in the natural world, and this in order that mankind might no longer be ignorant of the laws governing in that world, nor of the manner of life there—that in the mercy of the Lord he was chosen and prepared for this special work, not from any good in him above other men, but only as an instrument of the Divine beneficence. He says that he talked with spirits and angels for a great many years, and from what he saw and heard in the spiritual world has given us in his books a large amount of information about things hitherto unknown.”

“I should want something more than his mere declaration of the fact,” said Mrs. Langdon.

“Of course; and so would any one else.

If what he says of life in the other world is in anything contrary to reason, or Scripture rightly interpreted, it must be rejected. If not, and its contemplation or belief strengthens our reverence and love for God, and makes charity to the neighbor broader and more unselfish, then a belief in what he says on this subject can do no harm. Judge for yourself as to the good or evil effect on your own mind of what he relates about the reception of infants in heaven when they are taken out of this world. Has it lessened your love and gratitude to God?"

"Oh no, no! Every day my heart blesses him for such a revelation of his tender care for my baby."

"Then you believe that all this is really so?"

"I cannot help believing it," my friend replied. "Now that it has been told to me, I have an inner perception that it is and must be true. How could it be otherwise? But tell me more about the condition and growth

of children in heaven as related by Swedenborg."

"He says," I replied, "that the angels into whose keeping they are given not only care for them in the most loving manner, but instruct them in heavenly things, and this in ways so perfect that nothing on earth is comparable therewith. No weariness attends this instruction, but only the delight of receiving. As they advance in their lives, growing in stature and intelligence day by day, instruction in higher and higher things is given. At length the loving mother-angel transfers her charge to angel teachers and they lead on in the pursuit of wisdom. The infant raised up into heaven grows in knowledge day by day, steadily advancing from childhood to youth, and so on toward the full maturity of all his powers, until he becomes a wise and loving angel; for it is intelligence and wisdom that make an angel. As nearly as I can remember what he says on this subject I will give you his very words: 'Many persons

imagine that infants are for ever infants among the angels in heaven. But the case is otherwise. Intelligence and wisdom constitute an angel; and so long as infants are without intelligence and wisdom, although they are associated with angels, they are not angels. When they become intelligent and wise, then they first become angels. I have, indeed, been surprised to see that they are then no longer of an infantile disposition, but of a more mature angelic character. Intelligence and wisdom produce this maturity.'

"He says, further, that infants who grow up in heaven do not advance beyond early manhood, but remain in that state to eternity. And he adds: 'That I might be assured of this, it has been granted me to converse with some who were educated as infants in heaven, and who had grown up there. I have also spoken with some when they were infants, and afterward with the same when they had become young men, and heard from them the



progression of their life from one age to the other.' ”

“If,” said Mrs. Langdon, who had been listening with deep attention, “the inner sight of this man were really opened, so that he could see what was going on in the other world, he must have seen little children with their angel attendants. Does he tell how they looked and what they were doing?”

“He relates much of what he saw and heard,” I answered, “and many times speaks of children. In one place he says: ‘It was granted me to see little children most elegantly clothed, having their breasts adorned with garlands of flowers resplendent with celestial colors, which also encircled their tender arms. On one occasion I saw some children with their instructresses, accompanied by virgins, in a paradisiacal garden. The children were clothed in the manner just mentioned, and when they entered the garden the clustering flowers above the entrance shot forth glad radiance. From this may be inferred the

peculiar quality of their delights, and that they are introduced by agreeable and delightful objects into innocence and charity, which are continually insinuated from the Lord by those mediums.'

"In many places he speaks about the state of children who have been taken from this world to heaven, but I cannot remember now all the particulars. He often mentions having seen them, and in all cases they were with angel attendants and instructors, and surrounded with every possible attraction. Their state, as compared with that of infants and children most favorably conditioned in this life, is represented as beyond comparison more blessed and desirable."

Our conversation was interrupted here, and not again renewed. But once afterward did Mrs. Langdon refer to it.

Hearing that her little Charley was sick, I called to see how he was, and found her in considerable anxiety about him. For several days he had complained of a pain just below

the ear; now it was red and swollen, and he could not hear on that side.

"I have been so anxious ever since he had the scarlet fever," my friend said, with a tremor of alarm in her voice. "It so often leaves bad effects."

I said what I could to allay her fears, but it did not amount to anything, for I was as much in the dark as herself. The poor little fellow was in considerable pain, and rolled from side to side on his bed, moaning at intervals. The doctor came in while I was there and made rather light of the case, but this in no way lessened the anxiety of Mrs. Langdon. After he had gone away, and Charley, under a temporary relief from pain, had fallen asleep, she said with much feeling: "Oh, Agnes, it is such a comfort to me to know that dear Franky is in the care of a wiser mother than I am, that no sickness or pain or grief can come near him, that he is being led and guided and ministered to with a loving solicitude beyond our imagination to conceive!

This one," laying her hand on the sleeping child, "needed the tenderest care of an earthly mother, and when the good Lord translated my sweet baby to heaven and gave him an angel-mother, he brought this one to me and said, 'Open your heart and take him in, and you shall be comforted;' and he has more than kept his promise. Dear, dear baby!" and she bent over and kissed him fondly. "What might not his fate have been if my heart had refused to take him?"

"It is better for all," I said—"better for the babe in heaven and the babe on earth, and better for the sorrowing mother who has been so largely comforted."

"Yes, it is better," my friend replied in a low voice, speaking as if to herself.

For an hour the baby slept, and when he awoke he was free from pain. From that time the swelling began to subside. In a few days he was as well as ever, and Mrs. Langdon thanked God for his recovery with a heart full of gratitude.

"When I think," she said to me not long afterward, "of all that has happened in the last two years, my heart gets so full that I weep as I sit alone, but the tears that drop from my eyes are not from sorrow, but from a joy so deep that words would fail to express it. Oh, Agnes! if I had, in blind selfishness, refused the office to which the loving God called me, how different all would have been to-day! How different it might have been with him!" and she looked at her adopted child with eyes all alive with love. "Oh, I shudder sometimes when I think of him as a poor, neglected, cast-off baby, cold and hungry and cruelly treated! Thank God for him that it is not so—that I opened my half-deaf ears to his baby cries and took him to my heart!"

Was she not comforted? Not as time comforts, by deadening grief, but comforted with love and peace, and the blessing God always sends to those who do his will. The fountain of mother-love he opened in her heart was

not left to become a stagnant pool, breeding unwholesomeness, but a spring of living water, blessing as it flowed, while to her was given that influx of heavenly delight which is the reward of all who forget themselves in doing good.



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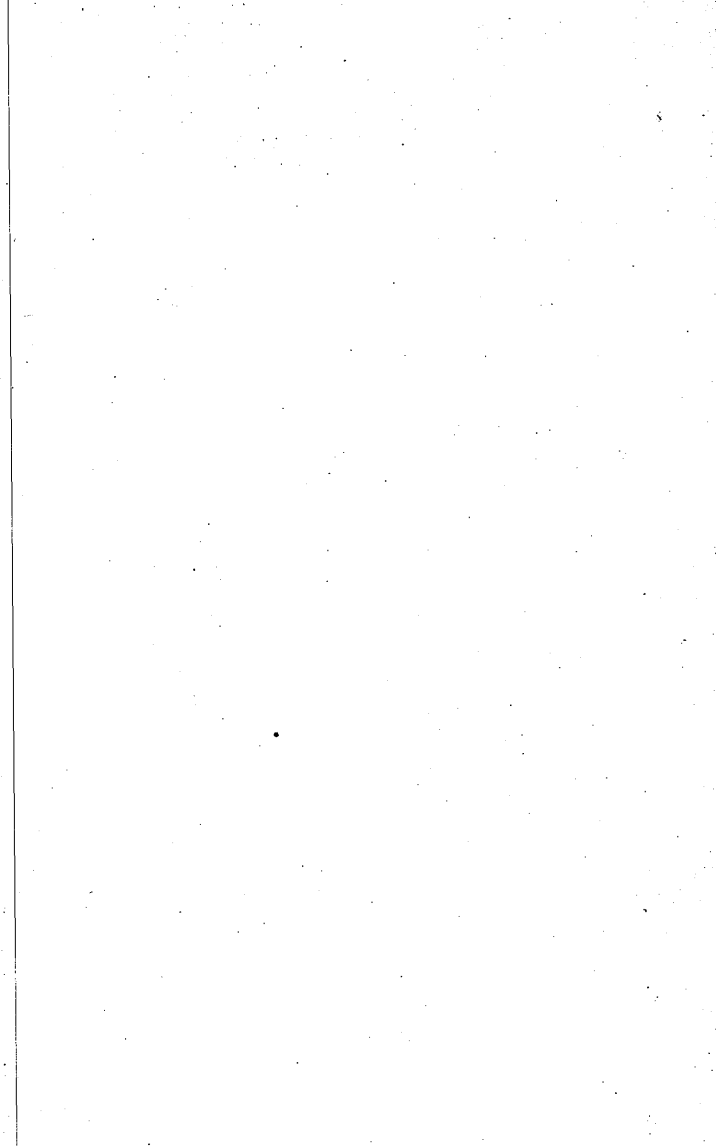
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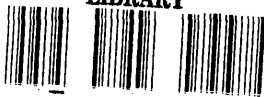
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